

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council Meeting Minutes, July 7, 2016

Attending: Rodney Barker, Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Steve Feinstein, Groot Gregory, Nathaniel Lichtin, Srdj Nedeljkovic, Julius Starkman, Amy Wayne

Ex Officio Present: None

Guests:

Hassan Broughton, Newton Highlands
Janet Fagan, Newton Highlands Beautification Committee
Amy McKnight Fazen, Newton Highlands Beautification Committee
Ruthanne Fuller, Newton City Council
Rena Getz, Waban Neighborhood Area Council
Paul Green, Walnut Street, Newton Highlands
Sallee Lipshutz, Waban Neighborhood Area Council
Lily Canan Reynolds, Newton Community Engagement Manager
Barbara Smiley, Newton Highlands Local Historic District Planning Group
Sonya McKnight, Newton Highlands Beautification Committee

Secretary's Report and Treasurer's Report

Srdj opened the meeting at 7:35 PM. The Secretary's Report for June was approved with one correction.

The Treasurer's Report included the following. As of July 4, 2016, we had \$16,295.30 in our checking account, of which \$8,321.38 is currently available. \$120.00 is available in cash.

\$400.00 is still owed to us for Village Day activities and we still owe Steve \$304.63 for expenses related to that event.

Most financials complete for Village Day. Net surplus between \$640.00 and \$3,500.00.

For the Local Historic District, total proceeds stand at \$3,075.00 and total outlays stand at \$1,336.35.

Village Day Budget Update

Groot also presented the latest Village Day budget updated to July 7th. Total actual income to date is \$16,381.00 and total expenses come to \$13,039.66. This results in a net profit of \$3,341.34.

Newton Highlands Beautification

Janet Fagan came before the Council to give an update on beautification projects in the Highlands and to introduce Sonya McKnight and Amy McKnight Fazen who are taking over responsibility from Janet for overall beautification activities in the Highlands.

Janet briefed us on past and current beautification projects in the Highlands which mainly involve an ambitious set of flower plantings, most in the Village center, but others on the periphery on Walnut Street, the Walnut Street Bridge, and the Hope Fountain. The merchants and landlords have generally been quite generous in supporting these projects.

Janet said that their budget was adequate for this year's beautification efforts. And she had high praise for all the volunteers who have helped make this program a reality over the years she headed it up. Several Council members commended Janet for her tireless efforts and she received sustained applause from both members and guests.

Newton Highlands MBTA Project

Robert Solomon appeared before the Council to give an update on the Highlands MBTA Station accessibility project. Robert and Srdj stressed that the \$7,000,000 allocated for the program is still in the pipeline, but that this doesn't automatically guarantee that it will result in a completed project. There was some discussion as to whether this money could be transferred into another project and general agreement that it probably couldn't be moved in this manner.

But Robert was emphatic in stating that things could still slip through the cracks without sustained pressure from the Mayor, our state representatives and state senator, and the MBTA itself. Srdj noted that Ruth Balsler is totally committed to this project. Robert announced that he would be meeting with Tom Marr at the MBTA this coming week to see what could be done to get the money and project rolling. Robert promised to report back to us next month.

Report by Newton's new Community Engagement Manager

Srdj introduced Lily Canan Reynolds who was recently appointed the Newton Planning Department's first Community Engagement Manager. She recently moved here from Vancouver, British Columbia where she had a successful career developing innovative community-lead projects with immigrant seniors, urban indigenous communities, youth, women, active transportation advocates, artists, local businesses and neighborhood groups

Her priorities involve helping to advance outreach and community cooperation for Planning Department priorities relevant to "Newton in Motion", the City's 25 year Transportation Development Plan. She will also be heavily involved in Mayor Warren's vision for a long range housing strategy in Newton. A consulting company from San Francisco is spearheading the development of these projects.

An extended discussion took place that mainly involved points that Council members hoped would be addressed through Lily's outreach efforts. Members informed Lily about the Local Historic District that is being developed through the efforts of Area Council members and other residents of our village. There was also concern that plans could emerge that would radically change the character of the Newton Highlands Village including areas next to Rodney Barker Square.

Members also asked Lily if she could clear up a bit of confusion about whether the City is proposing to construct 800 affordable units in Newton or 800 units with only a portion allocated for affordable housing.

Members of the Council stressed that they looked forward to working with Lily and Lily reciprocated this offer while inviting all of us to contact her with any comments, concerns or observations.

Village Day Summary

Steve reported on the results of Village Day. From a financial perspective, the Auction was a huge success, and we, at least, broke even with the road race.

Overall, the event was a huge, huge success. After the event, a meeting was held with organizers to review what worked and what didn't work.

Items in Brief

- We are planning for September 15th or the 22nd for the open house reception at the Crystal Lake Bathhouse to initiate the Crystal Lake – Vision 2020 process. The goal will be to work towards a new bath house at the Lake by the summer of 2020.
- The Charter Commission will be discussing Area Councils on September 14th. At our August meeting, Nathaniel brief us on what to expect and how we can influence the Commission's position.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Bob Burke, Secretary,
Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council